



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
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Town Clerk (860)441-6640
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(860)441-6630

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Bruce S. Flax, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor Flax and Councilor Kolnaski

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2009-0090 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of March 3, 2009, March 10, 2009, and March 17, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. NEW BUSINESS

2009-0013 Joint Meeting with Stonington Board of Selectmen (2009 Standing Referral)

Meeting Postponed

Town Manager Oefinger received a message from the Stonington First Selectman's office indicating that Stonington could not attend the meeting, which they thought was scheduled for Wednesday, April 22nd.

2009-0007 Labor Negotiations (2009 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, that members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman, Manager of Labor Relations Joyce Sauchuk, Police Chief Kelly Fogg, and Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 6:07 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining concerning all Town bargaining units (Police, Steelworkers, Supervisors, GMEA and Dispatchers). This action is taken without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 1-200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

The executive session concluded at 6:56 p.m.

2009-0083 FYE 2010 Proposed Budget Deliberations

Discussed

expressed an interest in exploring alternative budget scenarios with the Board of Education and obtaining answers to the questions previously posed by Councilor O'Beirne. A decision on whether or not to have a third meeting with the Board of Education was postponed until after the April 16th meeting.

Councilor Sheets stated she would like to know why the Boys and Girls Club was pulled out of Kolnaski School and whether or not there will be a Summer Food Program at West Side. Manager of Labor Relations Joyce Sauchuk noted that the Town is working with Mary Hill from the City to see if a program can be held at West Side.

2009-0004 Revised Position Descriptions (2009 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman noted that the two proposed positions were originally presented during budget deliberations. The first position in the Library combines two supervisors into a single position. Discussion followed on the duties in the job description.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Mr. Ackerman described the second position, a Program/Project Manager in the Office of Planning and Development Services that would shift the Project Manager for Schools Construction from Public Works to this position.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with writing a job description for a specific individual and noted his preference for the position being located in the Public Works Department. Councilor Streeter asked about the future of the position if Phase II of the school project is approved. Councilor Monteiro noted for the public that this position was discussed at length during budget deliberations.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0091 Summer Food Service Program (2009)

Discussed

Joyce Sauchuk explained that Human Services has historically run this program. This year, Parks and Recreation will run the program at William Seely School and Claude Chester School, with assistance from Administrative Services. The Town is working with the City to get West Side approved as an additional site. No matching funds are required.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0074 FYE 2009 Fourth Quarter Transfers

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo described the proposed transfer of \$331,475 from Contingency to other functions to cover legal costs associated with personnel and labor related issues; salary adjustments; and snow removal costs and associated overtime.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0075 Approval of Purchasing Policy and Procedures Manual

Discussed

incorporated into the Town's purchasing manual as required by recent revisions to the Charter. Highlights include raising the threshold for bids and eliminating public notice in the newspaper for bids. Councilor Sheets objected to eliminating the newspaper notices and discussion followed on how contractors look for bids.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Schmidt
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

2009-0076

Update of the Debt Policy and Management/Fiscal Practices

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo reviewed the revisions to the document.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with Item D. 2., which states that "the Town shall annually allocate, through the budget process, not less than four (4) percent of the Total General Fund Budget" to Capital Reserve. Town Manager Oefinger explained that this provision is part of an ordinance and can not be changed. Under the ordinance, the Town Manager is obligated to allocate 4% in the Manager's budget, but the Town Council and RTM are not obligated to adopt that figure. Discussion followed on revising the Debt Policy wording to match the wording in the ordinance.

Councilor O'Beirne also expressed concern with the upper limit in Item G. 2. (b) that indicates the General Fund reserve will be "maintained in an amount equal to at least five (5) percent and no greater than ten (10) percent of annual general fund expenditures." The Town Manager did not object to eliminating the upper limit, but suggested that the Council consider raising the minimum.

Councilor Sheets asked if the policy addresses practices such as credit-debt swapping. Mr. Pandolfo noted that this policy is refined over time and approved by the Town's financial advisor.

Discussion followed and the consensus of Councilors was to have staff revise the document to reflect ordinance language in D. 2., and to increase the General Fund reserve minimum to some unidentified amount.

2009-0088

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Funding

Discussed

Chief Kelly Fogg outlined the request to participate in the COPS program to hire four additional officers. The Town's previous long range plan was to hire a total of six officers to reduce the historical reliance on overtime. Only two officers have been hired and the remaining four positions were put on hold due to budgetary considerations. These funds would pay 100% of the approved entry-level salary and fringe benefits for three years. The Town would pay the difference between the base salary and any increases over the three years. Beginning with the fourth year, the Town would assume all costs for the four positions for at least one additional year. The agreement also requires that the Town not reduce its budget to take advantage of this grant and that the Town maintain the pre-grant staffing level in the Police Department. Chief Fogg noted the advantage of this program is if the Town intends to move forward with hiring the four officers in the future, this program will pay for the three years, with the first year being mostly training. By the fourth year when the Town starts paying, the Town will have fully trained officers.

Town Manager Oefinger reiterated that this is a good deal if the Town's long-term plan is still to bring on additional officers. The Town chose not to take advantage of this program in the past, but the economic situation is different now.

Councilor Sheets expressed her commitment to hiring the additional officers to address the overtime issue. Councilor O'Beirne stated he would prefer to seek funding for two positions rather than four.

Chief Fogg noted that the grant has been submitted, but grant awards will not be made until September.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that the Town accept the grant for two officers. Councilor Monteiro stated she would like more time to study the implications of the grant. The motion and second were withdrawn, and the consensus of the Council was to discuss this item after budget deliberations end.

2009-0034**Disposition of Eastern Point School Property****Discussed**

A public hearing on this issue was held last week and draft minutes were distributed to Councilors. Staff also distributed information on the Marine Science High School proposal from LEARN. A representative from LEARN noted that available slots for Groton residents will depend on what towns sign on to the program. All towns in LEARN are eligible to participate. It is estimated that about 10 students from Groton will be eligible and able to attend. Students are chosen by an open lottery system.

The Town Manager requested authorization from the Council to begin lease negotiations with LEARN.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0065**Disposition of Colonel Ledyard School Property****Discussed**

The Town Manager noted that a public hearing on this issue was conducted last week and Councilors received draft minutes with the comments. The Town Manager is seeking authorization to begin lease negotiations with the City of Groton/Groton Utilities.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0082**National League of Cities Prescription Discount Program****Discussed**

Councilor Sheets noted that this program requires no matching funds from the Town; the Town needs only to advertise the program and provide locations where the discount cards can be distributed. The Town Manager noted that there would be some staff time required and he has some questions on the program. It was noted that this program is designed for residents without health insurance or prescriptions that are not covered by insurance.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0068**Town Participation in Silver Star Banner Day - May 1st****Recommended for Deletion**

After reviewing information distributed with the agenda packet, the consensus of the Council was to issue a proclamation for Silver Star Banner Day.

2009-0081**Pfizer Community Grant - Library**

Discussed

Director of Library Services Betty Anne Reiter described the grant application for funds to purchase computers for the upgraded teen area.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0084 Lily Lane Trail Grant Contract Extension**Discussed**

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby explained the request for a one year extension of a Department of Environmental Protection contract for the Lily Lane Trail grant.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0086 Connecticut Dial-A-Ride Grant

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0089 Historic Document Preservation Grant (FY2010)

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0092 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)**Discussed**

Police Chief Kelly Fogg noted this grant would be used to purchase three Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs), completing the outfitting of all marked police cruisers.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0078 Proposed Legislation on Municipally Acquired Open Space**Not Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger noted that this item was placed on the agenda because it was previously discussed by the Council, but no action was taken. The Mayor stated there is no need to discuss this item.

2009-0009 Legislative Policy (2009 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent indicated that not much has happened in the legislature recently. The Democrats have issued their response to the Governor's budget. Legislation is under consideration that would delay some towns' revaluations, but this would impact what has been a staggered start date for Connecticut towns and could negatively impact available professional resources for towns doing revaluations.

2009-0039 Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community**Discussed**

Councilor Sheets introduced the subject matter and the Task Force's request that the Council authorize the Town Manager to apply for stimulus funds for energy efficiency projects. She noted that this is not a directive, but an authorization to register for funding in what is a time sensitive process. There is also a requirement that the Town identify a long-term energy-savings plan.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0093

Endorsement of a Grant Proposal by the Nature Conservancy

Discussed

Councilor Sheets noted that the grant proposed by the nature Conservancy to study estuaries in the Town of Groton will not cost the Town anything and will result in a report that will identify strategies for protecting estuaries.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

6. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.